Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently amended): A method of collecting an electronic signature for an electronic record stored in a database, the method comprising:

automatically creating an electronic record from data stored in a plurality of different database tables associated with a database transaction in response to an occurrence of a predetermined event;

storing an instance of the electronic record in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users associated with the database;

executing a rule associated with the electronic record to determine whether an electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the electronic record; and

if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required, marking the instance of the electronic record as unsigned and initiating a request to collect the required electronic signature prior to committing the database transaction to the database.

2. (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving an electronic signature from the user; verifying the electronic signature; and in response to a positive verification of the electronic signature, marking the electronic record as signed.

3. (original): The method of claim 2 wherein the electronic record is stored in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users of the database.

4. (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic record comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

5. (original): The method of claim 3 wherein the unstructured data comprises a well formed XML document stored within a column of a table stored in the database.

6. (original): The method of claim 4 wherein fields of the electronic record are filled with XML data based on a predefined mapping to multiple data sources.

7. (original): The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of, if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required, displaying data from the electronic record on a computer display.

8. (original): The method of claim 7 wherein data from the electronic record is display according to a predefined layout set forth in an XSL style sheet.

9. (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the rule requires a plurality of different electronic signatures and wherein, if execution of the rule results in a determination that a plurality of electronic signatures are required, requesting the plurality of electronic signatures.

10. (original): The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic record is initially marked as unsigned by setting an appropriate attribute associated with a database table in which at least part of the record is stored.

11. (Currently amended): A computer system that manages electronic records stored in a database, the computer system comprising:

a processor;

a database; and

a computer-readable memory coupled to the processor, the computer readable memory configured to store a computer program;

wherein the processor is operative with the computer program to:

(i) automatically create an electronic record from data stored in a plurality of different database tables associated with a database transaction in response to an occurrence of a predetermined event;

(ii) store an instance of the electronic record in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users associated with the database;

(iii) execute a rule associated with the electronic record to determine whether an electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the electronic record; and

(iv) mark the instance of the electronic record as unsigned and initiate a request to collect the required electronic signature if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required prior to committing the database transaction to the database.

12. (original): The computer system of claim 11 wherein the electronic record is stored in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users of the system.

13. (original): The computer system of claim 12 wherein the electronic record comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

14. (original): The computer system of claim 13 wherein the unstructured data comprises a well formed XML document stored within a column of a table stored in the database.

15. (original): The computer system of claim 14 wherein fields of the electronic record are filled with XML data based on a predefined mapping to multiple data sources.

16. (original): The computer system of claim 11 wherein the processor and computer program are further operative to obtain and verify the electronic signature, and thereafter, mark the electronic record as signed.

17. (Previously presented): The computer system of claim 16 wherein the processor and computer program are further operative to initially mark the electronic record as unsigned by setting an appropriate attribute associated with a database table in which at least part of the record is stored.

18. (Currently amended): A computer program product having a computer-readable storage medium storing a set of code modules which when executed by a processor of a computer system cause the processor to manage electronic records stored in a database, the computer program product comprising:

code for automatically creating an electronic record from data stored in a plurality of different database tables associated with a database transaction in response to an occurrence of a predetermined event;

code for storing an instance of the electronic record in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users associated with the database;

code for executing a rule associated with the electronic record to determine whether an electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the electronic record; and

code for marking the instance of the electronic record as unsigned and initiating a request to collect the required electronic signature if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required prior to committing the database transaction to the database.

19. (Previously presented): The computer program product of claim 18 wherein the electronic record is stored in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users of the system.

20. (Previously presented): The computer program product of claim 19 wherein the electronic record comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

21. (Previously presented): The computer program product of claim 20 wherein the unstructured data comprises a well-formed XML document stored within a column of a table stored in the database.

22. (Previously presented): The computer program product of claim 21 wherein fields of the electronic record are filled with XML data based on a predefined mapping to multiple data sources.

23. (Previously presented): The computer program product of claim 18 further comprising code for obtaining and verifying the electronic signature, and thereafter, marking the electronic record as signed.

24. (Previously presented): The computer program product of program 23 further comprising code for initially marking the electronic record as unsigned by setting an appropriate attribute associated with a database table in which at least part of the record is stored.

25. (Currently amended): A method of collecting an electronic signature for an electronic record stored in a database, the method comprising:

automatically creating an electronic record in response to an occurrence of a predetermined event from data stored in a plurality of different database tables associated with a database transaction, wherein the electronic record comprises unstructured, well-formed XML data stored in a character large-object (CLOB) format;

storing an instance of the electronic record in a common repository of electronic records that provides an audit trail that cannot be altered or disabled by users associated with the database;

executing a rule associated with the electronic record to determine whether an electronic signature is required to connote review and/or approval of the electronic record; and

if execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required, marking the instance of the electronic record as unsigned;

requesting the electronic signature;

after obtaining the electronic signature, verifying its authenticity; and

if the electronic signature is verified as authentic, marking the electronic record as signed prior to committing the database transaction to the database.